

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1204

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BUDAPEST 1496

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV SCUL SOPN HU US
SUBJECT: THE CROWN OF ST. STEPHEN: REACTION TO RETURN AND TREATMENT
UP TO MID-APRIL

1. IN RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST THERE FOLLOWS A
RECAPITULATION OF SALIENT FACTS CONCERNING THE RETURN OF
CROWN OF ST. STEPHEN TO HUNGARY. RECAP EMPHASIZES REAC-
TION OF HUNGARIAN AUTHORITIES AND PEOPLE.

2. THE RETURN AND THE CEREMONIES: UNITED STATES RETURNED
CROWN OF ST. STEPHEN TO HUNGARY JAN 6, IN MOST IMPORTANT
STEP TAKEN IN HUNGARIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN RECENT YEARS.
ITS RETURN WAS IMMEDIATELY ACCEPTED BY HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT
AND PEOPLE ALIKE AS AN INDICATION OF IMPROVED RELATIONS
WITH U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE AND MEMBERS OF THE U.S.
DELEGATION RETURNING CROWN, INCLUDING A NUMBER OF MEMBERS
OF CONGRESS, WERE CORDIALLY RECEIVED BY HUNGARIAN LEADERS
WITH WHOM THEY HAD SERIES OF MEETINGS. ALL EXPRESSED GRATI-
TUDE IN SPEECHES AND PRIVATELY FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S
DECISION TO RETURN THIS NATIONAL RELIC. CEREMONIES IN HALL
OF PARLIAMENT WENT FLAWLESSLY BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF
TWO COUNTRIES' DELEGATIONS, REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL

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SEGMENTS OF THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT, AND THE HUNGARIAN
PEOPLE, AS WELL AS THE INTERNATIONAL AND HUNGARIAN
PRESS. THESE REPRESENTATIVES INCLUDED MEMBERS
OF ALL HUNGARY'S RELIGIOUS FAITHS, CARDINAL LEKAI
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BEING PROMINENTLY INCLUDED
IN OFFICIAL RECEIVING DELEGATION. ALL STRESSED IN
CEREMONIES THAT RETURN OF CROWN WAS TO PEOPLE AND

NOT TO GOVERNMENT OR REGIME.

3. DISPLAY OF CROWN: AFTER IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY ROOM WAS PREPARED IN NATIONAL MUSEUM, CROWN WENT ON DISPLAY ALONG WITH OTHER RETURNED CORONATION REGALIA ON JAN 31, 1978. IT IS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC VIEWING FOUR DAYS PER WEEK, TUESDAY, SATURDAY, AND SUNDAY FROM 1000-1800 AND THURSDAY FROM 1200-2000. IN ADDITION, PRIVATE GROUP VIEWING BY ARRANGEMENT IS POSSIBLE ON TWO OTHER DAYS. HUNGARIAN DAILY TOURIST BULLETINS LIST CROWN AS ONE OF SIGHTS TO BE SEEN BY VISITORS. THERE IS GENERALLY STEADY FLOW OF VIEWERS, 99 PERCENT HUNGARIAN, DURING EXHIBIT HOURS. HUNGARIAN AUTHORITIES ESTIMATE THAT 140,000 PEOPLE HAVE SEEN THE CROWN SO FAR WHICH EMBASSY, ON BASIS OF SPOT VISITS, REGARDS AS AN ACCURATE ESTIMATE.

4. PUBLICITY: IN MONTH PRIOR TO RETURN OF CROWN POPULACE WAS EDUCATED TO IMPORTANCE OF EVENT BY SERIES OF ARTICLES IN ALL NEWSPAPERS AND NUMBER OF JOURNALS. ALTHOUGH PRECISE TIME AND VENUE OF RETURN CEREMONIES WAS NOT ANNOUNCED UNTIL DAY OF RETURN MANY HUNGARIANS KNEW BY WORD OF MOUTH. THERE WAS TV AND RADIO COVERAGE SLIGHTLY DELAYED TO PEAK EVENING VIEWING TIME AND THIS COVERAGE WAS ANNOUNCED IN MORNING PAPERS SO THAT VIRUTALLY ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HUNGARY SAW CEREMONIES WITHIN TWO HOURS AFTER THEY TOOK PLACE. FOLLOWING DAY ALL PAPERS HAD FULL-PAGE SPREADS AND IN SUCCEEDING DAYS NEWS ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS DEALT WITH THE EVENT. GENERALLY, MEDIA ACCEPTED AND FURTHERED CONCEPT OF CROWN AS NATIONAL SYMBOL, EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR CROWN'S RETURN AND PLAYED EVENT AS VERY POSITIVE FOR U.S.-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH PRESS DID USE OCCASION TO NOTE EVENT WAS SIGN OF REGIME'S SUCCESSFUL POLICIES AND INCREASING RESPECT IN WORLD, RETURN OF CROWN WAS NOT EXPLOITED PROPAGANDISTICALLY AND TREATMENT OF U.S. WAS ALWAYS FAVORABLE AND RESPECTFUL. IN TWO MONTHS WHICH HAVE GONE BY SINCE CEREMONIES, ARTICLES CONTINUE TO APPEAR IN PAPERS AND PERIODICALS AND TV HAD SERIES ON HISTORY OF CROWN WHICH INCLUDED INTER-VIEWS WITH CROWN GUARDS WHO HAD ENTRUSTED CROWN AND CORONATION REGALIA TO U.S. CARE IN 1945.

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5. GOVERNMENT REACTION: WHILE MAINTAINING IN DIGNIFIED MANNER THAT RETURN OF CROWN WAS RECOGNITION OF LONG-STANDING RIGHT OF HUNGARY TO POSSESS CROWN, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN GRATEFUL TO UNITED STATES AND PRESIDENT CARTER FOR MOVE AND HAS LIVED UP TO ALL COMMITMENTS IT MADE TO US CONCERNING THE EVENT, NAMELY CHURCH AND ALL HUNGARIAN PEOPLE WOULD BE INVOLVED WITH RETURN, AMPLE PUBLICITY WOULD BE GIVEN TO EVENT, CROWN WOULD GO ON PUBLIC DISPLAY FOR ALL TO SEE, INCLUDING HUNGARIAN EMIGRES. IN LATTER CONNECTION FOREIGN MINISTER PUJA IN HIS ANNUAL FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT ON MAR 24, PROMISED TO WELCOME HUNGARIANS FROM ALL OVER WORLD WHO WISHED TO COME AND SEE CROWN. GOVERNMENT HAS PERMITTED CHURCH TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH CROWN IN POSITIVE FASHION AND HAS BEEN BEHIND MEDIA EFFORTS TO REVIVE AND PRESERVE CROWN AS NATIONAL SYMBOL. IN ITS LAST CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING (MAR 15), THE HUNGARIAN SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY IN A RARE REFERENCE TO RELATIONS WITH UNITED STATES NOTED ITS SATISFACTION WITH POSITIVE STEP TAKEN BY PRESIDENT CARTER IN RETURNING CROWN.

6. REACTION OF CATHOLIC CHURCH: ALL FAITHS REACTED
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FAVORABLY TO RETURN OF CROWN. A JEWISH LEADER REMARKED TO THE EMBASSY THAT CROWN CEREMONIAL WAS ONE OF FEW OCCASIONS WHEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ALL COMMU-

NITIES CAME TOGETHER. CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS ALWAYS HAD A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO CROWN-ALTHOUGH IT HAS NEVER OWNED OR BEEN LEGAL POSSESSOR OF CROWN. HUNGARIAN PRIMATE CARDINAL LEKAI HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT CROWN'S RETURN. HE AND HUNGARIAN CHURCH HAVE ALSO WISHED TO SEE CROWN CONTINUED AS NATIONAL SYMBOL. CATHOLIC WEEKLY UJ EMBER IN JANUARY NOTED RETURN OF CROWN SHOWED THERE WERE COMMON AFFAIRS IN WHICH ALL HUNGARIANS CAN COOPERATE. IN FEBRUARY, IT SAID CROWN AND REGALIA WERE CHURCH RELICS WHICH WERE ETERNAL BADGES OF HUNGARIAN STATEHOOD AND INDEPENDENCE. IN MARCH, PRESTIGIOUS CATHOLIC MONTHLY VIGILIA MADE TWO IMPORTANT POINTS CONCERNING CROWN'S RETURN: (1) IT PUT AN END TO ANY ILLUSION THAT THERE WAS SOME MORE LEGITIMATE HUNGARY APART FROM HUNGARIAN TERRITORY AND, MORE INDIRECTLY, (2) THAT SYMBOLISM OF CROWN AS REPRESENTING HUNGARIAN NATION TRANSCENDED ANY PARTICULAR REGIME. THROUGHOUT, IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY HAS BEEN DELIGHTED WITH CROWN'S RETURN AND SHOWN EVERY SIGN OF CONTENTMENT CONCERNING HOW RETURN WAS HANDLED AND WITH RESPECT TO PLACE CROWN HAS BEEN GIVEN IN NATIONAL SCHEME OF THINGS.

7. PUBLIC REACTION: BEST EVIDENCE OF PUBLIC REACTION IS STEADY STREAM OF VISITORS TO NATIONAL MUSEUM. VISITORS GOING TO SEE RELIC ARE FROM ALL AGE GROUPS AND SOCIAL CLASSES. IMPRESSIONISTIC VIEW BASED ON NUMEROUS COMMENTS MADE TO EMBASSY OFFICERS BY INDIVIDUAL HUNGARIANS THEY MEET IS THAT THERE IS STRONG AWARENESS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IMPORTANCE OF CROWN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ITS RETURN IN TERMS OF RELATIONS WITH U.S. AMONG ALL MATURE HUNGARIANS. WHILE LARGE SEGMENTS OF YOUTH SEEM TO SHARE SAME ATTITUDE, THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE NOT AS SENSITIVE TO CROWN'S HISTORY OR SIGNIFICANCE. WE EXPECT THAT THIS INDIFFERENCE MAY DECREASE IF, AS NOW SEEMS PROBABLE, GOVERNMENT AND CHURCH'S EDUCATIONAL EFFORT WITH RESPECT TO CROWN CONTINUES. AN EMBASSY OFFICER WAS GRATIFIED TO OBSERVE AN HUNGARIAN COLLEGE AGE YOUTH READING AN OBVIOUSLY INEXPENSIVE PAPERBACK HISTORY OF CROWN ON EARLY MORNING COMMUTER'S SUBWAY TRAIN. WILGIS

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